

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Sub 1. (Amended) A valve assembly comprising:

a valve body having a rotary valve member and a valve stem extending from said valve body;

a handle having a proximal end and a distal end, and a longitudinal axis extending between said proximal and distal ends, said proximal end being connected to said valve stem and said handle being operable to rotate said valve member between an open position and a closed position;

said handle distal end defining an opening that is adapted to receive a ratchet handle, and said opening being oriented generally transverse to said handle longitudinal axis.

Sub 4. (Amended) In combination, an improved valve handle and valve handle extension, said valve handle having a proximal end operable to rotatably drive a valve member and a distal end selectively engageable with said valve handle extension, wherein said valve handle extension is a ratchet handle and said valve handle distal end defines an opening that receives a drive head of said ratchet handle, and wherein said opening extends in a direction that is generally transverse to a length direction of said handle.

5. (Amended) A method for creating additional torque to free a frozen valve,

wherein said valve includes a valve body receiving a rotary valve member, a valve stem extending from said rotary valve member and said valve body, and a valve handle having a proximal end connected to said valve stem, a distal end, and defining a longitudinal axis, comprising the steps of:

Ag providing an opening in said distal end of said valve handle, said opening extending in a direction transverse to said longitudinal axis and being adapted to receive a drive head of a ratchet handle;

inserting the drive head of the ratchet handle into said valve handle opening;

positioning said ratchet handle in a position to effectively extend a length of said valve handle; and,

applying force to said ratchet handle to force said valve handle in a desired rotational direction.

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